

GRETA RUIZ AND THE SIGNS OF LOVE

Written by

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PIVOTAL SCENE 1

FADE IN:

A CARD: Helsinki, Finland. 2050.

EXT. STREET. DAY.

We move through a narrow street with neon light covered art nouveau buildings. A quiet and yet attractive mash-up of classic and mid-21st century architecture.

INT. APARTMENT IN HELSINKI. DAY.

A couple sleeps on their bed. The neon light hitting straight on their faces. An AIR PURIFIER is on, next to the man's side. The mist is released in intermittent spray repetitions, enrobing the man's body. It densifies on the man's face and it is inspired through inhalation.

The woman sneaks out of bed as the man sleeps. She's GRETA RUIZ, 30 years old, Hispanic. She rummages in the closet and grabs a PRESENT. The man, same age as Greta, opens his eyes. His name is ESKO REINOLA. Greta leans forward and places the present on the bed, next to him.

GRETA  
Happy birthday, rakas!

Esko turns his back to Greta.

ESKO  
It's not my birthday, Greta.

GRETA  
It's a flying vacuum cleaner.

The man opens his eyes as big as plates. Sits up excited. He immediately lies down again, pretending to be uninterested.

ESKO  
You are not supposed to. Why do you do this to me?

GRETA  
You're welcome, I knew you'd like it.

Greta starts to get dressed, ready to start the day. A small smile on her face.

ESKO  
I hate it.

GRETA

Just like you hate the electric  
toothbrush you got last week?

Esko moans under the blankets.

ESKO

You need to stop. It's not my  
birthday I've been telling you for  
weeks.

Esko is fully awake, sitting on the bed.

GRETA

It might not be today, but I'm  
close, right? It could have been  
last week or this week, or three  
weeks ago, at the end of last  
month.

ESKO

You know we're not supposed to talk  
about it. I could get in trouble.  
We could get in trouble.

GRETA

You worry too much.

Esko gets out of bed, turns off purifier, with a quick SNAP  
of his fingers.

ESKO

If it was my birthday that by law I  
can't tell you, you might want to  
give ME some peace of mind.

GRETA

Some people think that trust is the  
foundation of a partnership.

Greta slips down a black robe dress.

ESKO

It's not me who makes the rules,  
Greta. Why did you start giving me  
presents all of a sudden, we've  
been together five years and we've  
never celebrated my birthday!

Esko gets out of bed and goes to bathroom. He starts the  
toothbrush.

GRETA

I didn't know you well back then,  
but now I have a theory about it.

ESKO (O.C.)

Am I a theory now?

GRETA

I figured it was about time. You  
said it yourself, five years  
together. I must test my theories  
otherwise our knowledge goes to  
waste.

ESKO

Forbidden theories.

Esko washes his mouth.

GRETA

I think it's about to trusting each  
other. The law doesn't forbid you  
to share your birthdate with your  
long-term partner.

Greta applies some lipstick and brushes her hair. A simple  
natural look.

ESKO

Unless she's using it for a  
forbidden thing. Astrology... trying  
to guess my sign.

GRETA

We only use the archetypes of each  
astrological sign.

Esko comes out of the bathroom. Opens his closet, his  
clothes are organized by color. Not too much color to see,  
though. The tones go from black to light brown and several  
intensities of grey.

ESKO

This isn't the first time, Greta.  
You've been trying to guess my  
(sign) since our second year  
together.

GRETA

But only now I'm showing that I  
know it already.

ESKO  
By giving me a different gift every week of the month?

GRETA  
I thought you would have revealed it to me by now if you were serious about us, Esko.

ESKO  
I trust you but I can't reveal that to you.

GRETA  
But I know IT already.

Greta's finished grooming. Turns to face Esko.

ESKO  
Do you? Do you have a birth certificate, passport? No! Those are confidential papers that by law I can't show to anyone, specially not to you.

GRETA  
What do you mean?

ESKO  
You know what I mean.

GRETA  
This is unbelievable. I thought you were okay with that.

ESKO  
Yes, until you started making me your subject!

GRETA  
I've always been honest about my work. And I'm not writing about you. I would never do that.

ESKO  
I thought you think it was huuhaa, bullshît.

GRETA  
Yes, but I write based on astrological sign archetypes to create characters, not on predictions.

ESKO  
It's still stupid and dangerous.

GRETA  
I knew this would happen..

ESKO  
See? You are predicting things!

GRETA  
..that you would never trust me, or  
our relationship...

ESKO  
How am I supposed to do that if you  
are studying me all the time?

GRETA  
...I should have never told you I  
work at Love Signs, I knew you  
would be instantly judgmental, like  
everyone else.

ESKO  
Well, it's a weird and stupid job.

Greta watches Esko in disbelief.

GRETA  
You know what? Maybe I can make a  
prediction.

ESKO  
Stop it. You are going to get us in  
trouble. If you are going to use  
astrology on me you must stop,  
those people in the government have  
people everywhere.

GRETA  
Wow, I didn't know this about you.

ESKO  
I though you knew my signal ready.

GRETA  
I was trying to focus on the  
positive side of ---(BEEPING  
SOUND)---(Virgos)

Esko is petrified.

GRETA (CONT' D)

I know many things. Your hypochondria, health obsession, healthy diet and absolute perfection... what I didn't know was that you were a petty unpassionate coward and that for a romance writer that is the sign of the end. That's is the only sign I'm seeing.

ESKO

You write huuhaa.

GRETA

I have a prediction for you.

ESKO

Stop it, Greta please!

GRETA

In five minutes time I will leave this apartment and I won't come back.

Greta unplugs the purifier.

CUT TO:

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET. DAY

GRETA walks down the street carrying the purifier. Esko looks out the window, watches Greta walking away.

ESKO

It was a gift, it belongs to me!

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM OF HELSINKI POLICE STATION. NIGHT.

We meet 27 year-old VILJA HUNTUNEN, sitting across a table from detective KARL HAKÅNS, who looks directly into her eyes. The middle age man struggles for eye contact because of the thick glasses on top of Vilja's nose.

Vilja struggles to sustain her head straight. Her chest moves up and down in a fast breathing pace, taking gulps of air under her tie dye T-shirt.

Detective Hakåns takes a piece of paper and reads from it.



HÅKANS

You have an impressive curriculum vitae, Ms. Huntunen. National prize for first novel, Nordic Council of Literature. Be careful! the Nobel prize is just across the Baltic sea. It's not far.

Vilja pushes up the metallic rims of her glasses resting on her nose. RED MARKS are visible. She fakes a smile, showing slightly dark tainted teeth. At last, she responds the middle age man's direct look with a sustained gaze.

HÅKANS (CONT'D)

And still you are a writer for this ridiculous Love Things, how do you explain that? Vilja Huntunen, the great writer also a romantic novel writer.

VILJA

A writer is a writer.

HÅKANS

Are you comparing writing the type of books that got you prizes to these silly love stories..?

Håkans opens a folder and reads.

HÅKANS (CONT'D)

"... Signs of Love"?

VILJA

"The person, be it gentleman or lady, who has not pleasure in a good novel, must be intolerably stupid" Jane Austen

HÅKANS

You said yourself, a good novel, what are these? these are far from masterpieces.

VILJA

People need to start somewhere, I'm not prejudiced.

HÅKANS

Most of your readers are young women, teenagers, do you think they need to get started in these fantasies about love?

(MORE)

HÅKANS (CONT'D)

Isn't a woman supposed to be smart and independent?

VILJA

Precisely, a woman who has it all, also has love. There's nothing wrong to remind our readers that love exists and that they shouldn't lose hope if they haven't found it yet.

HÅKANS

Your readers, you say?

VILJA

Yes, our readers, we have more than 10 million readers around the world.

HÅKANS

I meant you, personally, YOUR readers.

VILJA

Yes, I'm part of the writing team so I guess it's fair to say they're my readers.

Vilja rummages in her purse. She grabs a small bottle of Fisherman's Liqueur, a liquorice-based liquor.

VILJA (CONT'D)

Can I?

Detective Hakåns nods.

She sips a little from the bottle. The black stain on her teeth becomes darker.

HÅKANS

But you have only published one novel.

VILJA

Excuse me?

HÅKANS

I have here some information about the writing... arrangements. You are part of a team of ghost writers under the name of Carolina Rubí. People think she is a real writer but in reality it's a bunch of women posing to be her.

Vilja sips away more Fisherman's Liquor.

VILJA

It means you talked to our boss,  
you did a good job, detective.

HÅKANS

Yes, I have. A Ms. Talvio. She gave  
me interesting information.

HAKANS (CONT)

When I said your readers, I meant  
you only have a small portion of  
those thousands of readers.

Vilja stares blankly.

HÅKANS

Your work has only been selected  
once, why is that? you are the only  
one with great prizes and yet, you  
are passed over... constantly. Your  
work has only been selected one or  
two times to be published under  
Carolina Rubí's name.

Hakans continues reading closely.

HÅKANS (CONT'D)

A Greta Ruiz is the most popular  
writer, she always gets picked.

VILJA

Greta, yes, she has good ideas but  
she's bad at executing them.

HÅKANS

And still her novels are the ones  
that sell the most.

VILJA

She has typos and needs help in her  
phrasing.

HÅKANS

She is the star writer instead of  
you! What an irony.

VILJA

Her work only gets published  
because of the corrections I make,  
do you understand?

(MORE)

VILJA (CONT'D)

Greta doesn't understand a thing about words, she doesn't like them, she doesn't use them, sometimes she doesn't even type them.

Detective Hakåns shows interest, leans forward a bit.

HAKANS

And yet, her novels seem to sell a lot, what makes them different from your novels? is it because she knows about love and you only know about words?

VILJA

No, of course not. She's as unhappy as most of women these days, as loveless as I am.

HÅKANS

What's is her secret?

MS. TALVIO (O.C.)

That's enough, Vilja.

A woman looking like Vilja 30 years older, enters the room. She wears an office suit, instead of t-dye T-shirt.

VILJA

Mother!

MS. TALVIO

We must go now, you can speak to Love Signs Lawyer, Mr. Hakåns.

HÅKANS

Okay you can run, but you can't escape. We won't allow you to bring back the hysteria of the astrology signs. Miss Huntunen, you seem like a smart woman. Join the right side, respect the law. YOU NEED TO RESPECT THE LAW! DON'T MANIPULATE MEN!

Vilja gets up and follow Ms. Talvio to the door.

INT. POLICE STATION WAITING ROOM. DAY.

Ms. Talvio storms out the office door. Vilja follows her.

VILJA

Mother! Wait!

MS. TALVIO

What?

VILJA

Thank you for you taking me out of there.

MS. TALVIO

You're welcome. It is my duty as head of the company. You should stop drinking that thing, you know that.

VILJA

I wasn't. Where are you going now?

They both step out the building

EXT. STREET. DAY. CONT.

MS. TALVIO

Back to the office. It's end of the month, publishing time.

VILJA

Wow, did you come to get me in this time of the month when you are the busiest? Oh merry days!

MS. TALVIO

I must go.

VILJA

Have you read my manuscript?!

MS. TALVIO

You don't get to jump the line just because you are my daughter. I must go now.

VILJA

Fare thee well, mother.

Detective Hakåns sneaks up on Vilja, chewing, donut in hand and coffee in the other.

HÅKANS (O.C.)

So sweet, you mother and head of the company came in person to rescue you.

VILJA

I hope you don't think it's magic  
or astrology-

HÅKANS

Oh, no. We called her. We left a  
message telling her we had her star  
writer for an interview. Our  
secretary screwed up. She gave  
Greta Ruiz' name. .

A shadow falls on Vilja's face.

VILJA

"Oh, to compare a lover's love to a  
mother's is as unequal as futile"

HÅKANS

Is that Jane Austen again?

VILJA

No, it's mine.

Vilja strolls away.

PIVOTAL SCENE 2

EXT. NURSERY HOME. NIGHT.

Vilja and DETECTIVE HELKE, a slender tall woman wearing a camel color mac. The sign outside an art nouveau town house: RAUHALLINEN RUUSUNMARJA NURSERY HOME.

They walk silently towards the entrance. Vilja discretely drinks from a Fisherman's bottle.

DETECTIVE HELKE  
You best put that away, we don't  
want to give the wrong impression.

Vilja nods and hides the bottle inside her coat. She reaches a thick wooden door and knocks on it. A caretaker opens.

DETECTIVE HELKE  
We have an appointment to see Mrs.  
Laveran.

The caretaker lets them in. Leads them through a corridor. Knocks softly on a door and opens it. Inside we find an ELDERLY WOMAN, rocking on a chair. We see a LOVE SIGNS NOVEL right in front of her face as she reads it.

DETECTIVE HELKE  
Mrs. Laveran?

Mrs. Laveran puts the novel down. A peaceful face with rosy cheeks is shown. She nods.

DETECTIVE HELKE (CONT'D)  
Mrs. Laveran, we called this  
morning. We are here to find a  
missing item. A novel that was  
stolen.

MRS. LAVERAN  
A Carolina Rubí?

Detective Helke hesitates. Vilja takes a step forward.

VILJA  
Aye, yes. A Carolina Rubí novel.

Mrs. Laveran puts the novel down. Her face glows with excitement. They have her full attention.

MRS. LAVERAN  
She's good, isn't she?



VILJA

Aye, she is. Mrs. Laveran we are looking for something that was stolen from her. A handwritten manuscript.

DETECTIVE HELKE

A bulk of novels was stolen from the Love Sign corporation and we must find them.

MRS. LAVERAN

Not my novels. My mother left them to me.

Mrs. Laveran grabs the novel rapidly and presses it against her chest in protective mode.

VILJA

Mr. Laveran, we will not take your novels. Not to worry, dear. See, I work for Carolina Rubí and she lost a manuscript. A parchment.

MRS. LAVERAN

Oh! do you know Carolina Rubí? Oh she must be so beautiful.

VILJA

Aye, she is. And she loves writing, too. "She writes brave verses, speaks brave words, swears brave oaths, and breaks them bravely"

MRS. LAVERAN

That's so smart. It doesn't sound like Carolina.

VILJA

Thank you. You are right, that was Shakespeare.

Detective Helke represses a laugh, clears her throat. Vilja composes herself.

VILJA

Well, you must tell me, Mrs. Laveran, I'm in charge of Love Signs company and we must find it. Have you seen a bulk of novels somewhere?

MRS. LAVERAN  
 Oh, Nurse Sasha. She likes them,  
 she does read a parchment  
 sometimes. She says she can't read  
 it to me, she wants it for herself.

DETECTIVE HELKE  
 Where can we find her?

MRS. LAVERAN  
 With the brothers, the Haber boys.

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR. CONT.

A shadow steps into the corridor. Detective Helke and Vilja follow. We see the figure of a NURSE wearing an old fashion cap and white attire. She walks swiftly towards the end of the corridor. ENTERS the last room.

The room's door is ajar and Vilja pushes it gently. Shadows become intense and darker. Vilja ventures a step forward. Detective Helke stays in the corridor.

VILJA  
 Hello? Nurse Sasha?

Vilja walks amid an intense darkness. A couple of old MEN lie on single beds. Identical twins, the Haber boys. One of them suddenly moves his hands and grabs Vilja's arm.

OLD MAN  
 Help! Appua!

VILJA  
 Ouch, you rogue!

Detective Helke stays in the corridor. Pops in her head in the room.

DETECTIVE HELKE  
 Is everything okay?

VILJA  
 Ayes, yes. Stay there in case you  
 see anything. I'll take care of  
 this. It's what my mother would do.

NURSE SASHA is turned around, facing the back wall. Only her back is visible, a 1960's hair mane under the nurse's cap.

VILJA  
Madame? I'm here looking for  
something that belongs to me, I'm  
the authoress.

NURSE SASHA (O.S.)  
Is it about a lady who induces  
fierceness?

Vilja walks cautiously towards the back of the room.

VILJA  
I suppose, aye. See, we all are  
ghost writers of Carolina Rubí, and  
we need to recover this original.

NURSE SASHA  
Does she destroy the ones she loved  
to pieces so she can feast on their  
feces?

VILJA  
What, not. You seem to invent  
words. How now, what is it in you?

Nurse Sasha turns around and steps into the light. She's a  
beautiful WOMAN.

NURSE SASHA  
Did she love a man who was a  
Pisces?

The Haber twins open their mouths, letting out a silent  
scream. Only muffled SOUNDS come out of their mouths.

Swiftly, Nurse Sasha walks closer and vows to Vilja.

NURSE SASHA  
It's you, my child.

The Nurse's voice is a strange disembodied SOUND. Her lips  
barely move.

NURSE SASHA  
I'm your most devout admirer.

Vilja nods nervously. Nurse Sasha opens her arms and wraps  
them around Vilja, squeezing her strongly. Vilja tries to  
resist.

VILJA  
Let me go, you wretched woman!

Vilja and Nurse Sasha, holding tight to her, stumble and collapse against the back wall, cracking it OPEN. Vilja falls on the other side of the wall.

Detective Helke jumps into the room.

DETECTIVE HELKE  
Did somebody say a zodiac sign? you  
are breaking the law!

Nurse Sasha has now jumped on top of one of the Haber twins, sucking air out of his mouth, and breathing it in deep gulps.

NURSE SASHA  
PISCES!

INT. OTHER SIDE OF THE WALL. NIGHT.

On the other side of the wall, Vilja gets up and sees the PARCHMENT amid a collection of works of art: sculptures, paintings, books. A great variety of crafts and arts, most extremely well crafted. Vilja runs to the parchment.

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM. NIGHT.

Nurse Sasha keeps breathing air from the Haber twin. The man's life seems to escape with the air vanishing off his body. His face prunes and darkens until he stops breathing. Nurse Sasha now jumps to the other twin and starts inhaling his air out.

Detective Helke tries to stop it, but she is pushed against the wall with an invisible force.

Nurse Sasha transforms into a SUCCUBUS, a female demon, a dark creature with HOLLOW EYES and GIANT VULVA.

CUT TO:

INT. OTHER SIDE OF THE WALL. NIGHT.

Vilja hurries to get the parchment and TEARS it apart.

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM. NIGHT.

The succubus/Nurse Sasha SHRIEKS and then vanishes.

CUT TO:

INT. OTHER SIDE OF THE WALL. DAY.

Detective Helke walks in. Vilja is sitting on the floor, staring at the torn manuscript.

DETECTIVE HELKE (O.C.)  
So you wrote that?

VILJA  
Aye, for a Pisces boy. Such a shame.

DETECTIVE HELKE  
And every item here is the product of love for a boy of an insane group of girls?!

VILJA  
My friends, we couldn't find love in real life so we tried to call it through their zodiac signs!

DETECTIVE HELKE  
You and the friends of your gang were breaking the rules.

VILJA  
Who can blame us? Women are so alone these days, even as girls we were dreaming of falling in love. "We are all fools in love".

Vilja looks at her torn manuscript.

VILJA  
What a shame.

CUT TO:

INT. OTHER SIDE OF THE WALL. DAY.

A team of police officers confiscate the works of art. Vilja stands looking at everything, zoned out. She sips from her Fisherman's bottle.

VILJA

My only ardent fan was a demon.

DETECTIVE HELKE

So the teenage energy devoted to the boys they like, all trapped in their works of arts, used by the succubus to find men to prey from.

The Haber twin is taken out in a stretcher, he is alive and has recovered his actual appearance as a young man. The other Haber twin is taken out with a blanket on.

DETECTIVE HELKE

She would trap young men and had them passing as elderly, as she consumed them. At least the ones under the Pisces signs are safe, we should put an alert.

CUT TO:

INT. LOVE SIGNS INC. DAY.

Vilja waits opposite her mother, who is on the phone.

Vilja sip some Fisherman's, then cleans her teeth by rubbing them with her finger, then her tongue.

Ms. Talvio hangs up the phone.

MS. TALVIO

Detective Helke won't reveal that one of our writers has effectively written a novel based in an astrology sign.

VILJA

Yes, but it was when I was a teenager, I didn't know a succubus was going to use it to kill men.

MS. TALVIO

Why is it that when Greta and I are not here to stop these things from seeing the light, you seem to ruin everything.

VILJA

But we discovered the master pieces of the gang, we can find who those boys are and warn them.

MS. TALVIO  
And disclose our methods? No

VILJA  
They all will be in danger. Why are you unable to forgive me? I was wearing my heart on the sleeve in that novel

MS. TALVIO  
Precisely.

VILJA  
I demonstrated skill to write about love at a young age and you never encouraged me. You seem to admire Greta because she can write about love now at this age.

MS. TALVIO  
She knows how to do it like professional

VILJA  
How?

MS. TALVIO  
She doesn't take it seriously.

Fade out.

PIVOTAL SCENE 3



INT. APARTMENT IN HELSINKI . NIGHT.

Vilja enters a building. She is ready for a date, wears make up and a thick rain coat- Checks herself in the foyer mirror. Glamorous make up and hairdo. She peeks inside her coat, careful not to reveal too much to a passerby. Bare legs, bare arms, there doesn't seem to be much under the coat. Goes up the stairs.

Vilja opens slowly the door. Enters and looks around. A knock on the wall. There's people inside, somewhere.

A cigarette smokes on the kitchen counter. Vilja walks towards the source of the noise. A MOANING SOUND comes from the living room.

Vilja finds a couple making love against the living room wall. A beautiful young woman is pressed against the wall by a shirtless man with trousers down. The young woman looks at Vilja. Smiles cynically. The man moves mechanically, staring at the wall, in trance.

VILJA

Oliver?

Oliver snaps out of the trance. He stops moving, looks at himself, pushes the young woman away. Pulls up his trousers.

VILJA (CONT'D)

Is this why you told me not to come?

Oliver is confused. The young woman has retracted into the corner.

OLIVER

Vilja, I.. (tuns to see the young woman) who are you? You came to deliver a package.

Oliver gasps for air, his legs bend and his hair goes gray. The woman on the corner gets up and runs for the door.

VILJA

Hey, Stop!

Vilja chases the young woman and grabs her by the wrist.

VILJA (CONT'D)

Who are you?

The young woman starts ageing until she transforms into a middle age woman and then into a familiar shape, the shape of Ms. Talvio.

VILJA (CONT' D)

Mother?

The transformation ends and Ms. Talvio is there.

MS. TALVIO

I had to do it. He was ruining you.

VILJA

He was giving me hope.

MS. TALVIO

The worst thing for an astrology writer is to believe in the things she writes.

GRETA

And you have become this? are you one of them?

MS. TALVIO

There's always a price to pay.

Ms. Talvio leaves the apartment.

Vilja goes to the window and watches her mother stroll down the street. She stops and turns to see her. A mix of regret, pride and coldness as she knew that could never see each other again. Vilja dries her eyes. Composes herself and returns to the living room. Stares at an old painting, grabs a candle and lights the corner of the frame, the portrait is on fire.

On the street, Ms. Talvio screams and bursts in blue flames.

Vilja falls on her knees and cries.